

## **Rt. 33 ills spread to 2nd bridge**

**Southbound span may have to be torn down, rebuilt to avoid sinkhole issues.**

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By ALYSSA YOUNG

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PALMER TWP. -- With the new northbound Route 33 bridge over the Bushkill Creek just one month from completion, state transportation officials are facing another quandary 80 feet to the west.

They may need to tear down and rebuild the southbound bridge that spans the stream to protect it from sinkholes, a spokesman said Thursday.

After a sinkhole damaged the northbound bridge Jan. 24, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation made plans to prevent a similar fiasco from plaguing the southbound span near Route 191.

PennDOT planned to tie the southbound bridge's piers and abutments to solid rock beneath the ground.

But the underground rock is deeper than officials expected.

Workers may be unable to install the pin-pile foundations without dismantling at least part of the bridge because the drilling equipment they must use is very large, PennDOT spokesman Ronald Young Jr. said.

Officials in Chief Engineer M.G. Patel's office are analyzing cost estimates to take down and replace a section of the bridge or the entire structure, Young said. They are expected to choose one of the methods next week.

If PennDOT decides to rebuild the entire bridge, it will be designed like the new northbound bridge -- a single span with no piers, Young said.

Nyleve Bridge Corp. of Emmaus expects to complete the northbound bridge in early July, about a month ahead of schedule, he said.

Pin-pile foundations tie the bridge's two abutments to rock that ranges from 70 feet to more than 250 feet deep.

Young did not know the depth of the rock under the southbound bridge.

Officials have not decided how they would divert traffic while workers reinforce the southbound bridge, Young said.

Since early February, drivers heading north have been using two paved crossover lanes to bypass

the bridge construction site.

Eastern Industries of Center Valley built the crossovers, which allow motorists to stay on the highway by crossing the grass median into one of the two southbound lanes, then returning back to the northbound highway after they pass the bridge.

If necessary, a similar method could be used to bypass the southbound bridge, Young said.

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